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White House Says It Had Schorr Job

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

A White House official said yesterday that CBS correspondent Daniel Schorr was under consideration last year to be assistant to the chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality.

The official told The Washington Post that Schorr's name was considered for the position by Frederic V. Malek, chief White House recruiter, and that his discussion of Schorr's name with aides triggered the FBI investigation of the correspondent.

Schorr is scheduled to testify today at the opening of hearings called by Sen. Sam J. Ervin (D-N.C.) on press freedoms. Ervin is chairman of a Senate constitutional rights subcommittee.

Ervin charged last night that the White House has refused to permit any of its officials to testify at the hearings.

He said he had requested Malek, Special Counsel Charles Colson and Communications Director Herbert G. Klein to testify to set the record straight, but all declined.

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Ervin said the only response was a letter from John W. Dean III, counsel to the President, who wrote, "This matter has been fully and carefully reviewed. There are no indications of any intent on the part of anyone in the White House to harass or intimidate Mr. Schorr by initiating an investigation into his background.

Erwin also released a letter from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover supporting the White House explanation that Schorr was considered for an administration job.

"My mind is open on whether there was a job," Schorr said yesterday when informed of the White House official's comment.

"That is not the issue. The issue is whether the administration should have the FBI investigate anyone not accused of a crime without his consent."

Schorr said he had heard nothing about a job offer or the nature of the job from the time the FBI first began investigating him last August to the present.

After the news broke that the correspondent was under investigation his name was dropped from consideration. Since then other well known TV newsmen have been interviewed in connection with the job, the official said. He declined to give their names, but he said the job had not been filled.

There are plans to undertake the project, whether under the direction of someone brought in from the outside or by someone already in the government, the official said.

The FBI investigation of Schorr brought accusations that the administration was seeking to intimidate Schorr, who had been critical of administration policy on a number of occasions.

Schorr had never been told he was under consideration for a job and had not sought one. He said in November, when news of the investigation broke, that he did not believe there was a job to be offered.

"Out of curiosity, mostly, I have checked every source who might know without the slightest indication that I was ever considered for any post," he said in November.

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said at the time that the administration definitely had a job in mind for Schorr, but he declined to say what it was on the grounds it would make it more difficult to fill the post.

Ziegler did say that it was in the environmental area, and he promised to disclose the nature of the job later.

The official who gave The Post the information yesterday said Schorr had been considered because of his prominence and experience as a TV newsman and because he had done important work in the environmental area.

Malek knew that Schorr had been critical of the administration on occasion, the official said. But Malek was under instructions from President Nixon to find ways to encourage individuals to do more to help clean up the environment.

Malek and Russell E. Train, director of the Council on Environmental Quality, agreed that the best way to enlist public support for individual initiative in the environmental field was with a series of television programs, the official explained.

The President was not told that Schorr was being considered. When criticism developed over the FBI investigation, the President, according to Ziegler, directed that in the future no FBI investigations be started on a person being considered for a job without his knowledge.